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Approved For Release 2004/05/05 : CIA-RDP81M00980R001600070003-5

COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

Executive Registry

77-5884/6

OLC #77-5060

B-163058

November 16, 1977

The Honorable Stansfield Turner
Director, Central Intelligence Agency

Dear Admiral Turner:

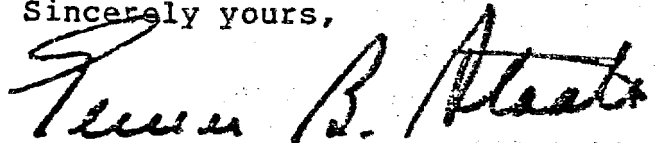
This is in response to your letter of October 19, 1977, regarding our request for information on the Soviet bomber threat to the Continental United States.

I share your concern about the handling of sensitive foreign intelligence assessments. As you recognize, however, there are certain areas where the General Accounting Office requires the opinions of the intelligence community in order to present factual and balanced reports to the Congress. We believe that the type of substantive briefings on selected matters that your letter proposes will meet our needs. We will forward all requests for briefings through a central point in GAO to be arranged with your Office of Legislative Counsel.

With regard to the postscript in your letter, we expressed our concern to the Secretary of Defense on July 14, 1977, (enclosure) about the continuing problem of release to the press of sensitive information from draft reports forwarded by us to the Department of Defense for review and comment. The Office of the Secretary of Defense has consistently refused to limit the number of copies of our reports that are circulated for review and comment so that appropriate controls could be maintained to prevent premature release. We have, therefore, decided to take steps, on our own, to restrict circulation of some of our draft reports. In the future, for example, we may decide not to submit written reports for comment, and solicit only informal comments from selected officials when they deal with particularly sensitive matters.

We certainly share your interest in limiting the disclosure of highly sensitive data. I believe the steps you propose, and those that we are taking, will enable both of us to discharge our responsibilities to the Congress with a minimum of risk.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Thomas B. Heath". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Thomas" and last name "Heath" clearly distinguishable.

Comptroller General
of the United States

Enclosure



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20348

JUL 14 1977

The Honorable
The Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am deeply concerned over the continuing problem of the premature release to the press of classified and sensitive draft reports forwarded to the Department of Defense for review and comment.

The latest such incident involved our report on the proposed sale of the E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) to Iran. The report, which was requested by a number of members of Congress in anticipation of forthcoming hearings, deals with sensitive foreign policy and security matters. A draft was forwarded to the Office of the Secretary of Defense on Monday, July 11 and specific details appeared in an article in the Washington Post this morning. It was clear from the article that the reporter had a copy of our report or had been given free access to it.

As you know, it has been our longstanding policy to have Department of Defense officials comment on our reports before they are issued and to review them for appropriate security classification. A relatively large number of draft reports are furnished to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) for those reviews. In the past there have been substantial numbers of premature disclosure of our reports and because of the large number of copies circulated, it would have been impossible to ascertain where the press obtained its information.

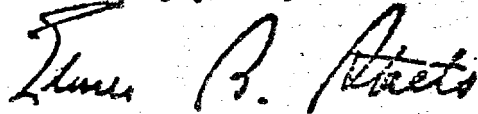
Recently we attempted to limit the number of copies furnished to OSD when the subject matter of the report was sensitive. In the case of the AWACS report we provided one copy to OSD/Comptroller for security review and one for comment by the Defense Security Assistance Agency. We are aware, however, that numerous copies were made and circulated throughout the Pentagon by OSD officials. This, of course, negates our attempts to restrict the opportunity for the unauthorized release of our reports.

I realize that it is very difficult to prevent leaks of newsworthy information but I believe it is incumbent on our respective staffs to make every effort to protect such information until the appropriate time for its release. I would appreciate your calling

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this problem to the attention of senior OSD officials. I also think
it would be advisable for our staffs to work out revised procedures
for handling sensitive reports in the future.

Mr. Jerome H. Stolarow, Deputy Director of our Procurement and
Systems Acquisition Division will be in charge of this effort. I
would appreciate your designating a person to work with him in this
matter.

Sincerely yours,



Comptroller General
of the United States

☐ UNCLASSIFIED

☐ INTERNAL
USE ONLY

☐ CONFIDENTIAL

☐ SECRET

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

SELY BROWN MEETING

GAO Defense Clearance
Intell. Assets
clearance

FROM:

George L. Cary
Legislative Counsel

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

18 November 1977

STAT

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

OFFICER'S
INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

1.

Acting DDCI

2.

3.

DCI

4.

5.

OLC

6.

7.

8.

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10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

This is a matter you should take up with Secretary Brown at your meeting with him this afternoon. It concerns granting of special clearances to GAO and a general Community policy with respect to GAO relationships.

STAT

George L. Cary
I have discussed this with [redacted] who agrees with my views. [redacted]

25K1

We have just received a response from the Comptroller General to your letter to him on the Soviet bomber threat. We don't believe this affects our recommendations. (See attached)

1 DEC 1977

DCI CITED AT NPIC MEETING. RRR